

## **Transcription: Allan Turner**

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*Today is Wednesday, April 3, 2013. My name is James Crabtree, and today I'll be interviewing Mr. Allan Turner. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Mr. Turner is at the Tejada Texas State Veterans Home in Floresville, and I'm in the General Land Office building in Austin. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for our program.*

**Allan Turner:** You're welcome.

*Yes sir. Sir, the first question that I always start with is please tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you went into the military.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, I grew up and was raised in Wink, Texas.

*I know where that is.*

**Allan Turner:** And, you know, I played football and baseball, and I did pretty good in school, you know. I got by, but then when the war came, my dad was a World War I veteran in the Signal Corps, and he made sergeant in there, and he wanted to try and reenlist but he couldn't. He was too old. He was 41 years old and they wouldn't take him. He was one of our first air traffic controllers, meteorologist. We had a three-man station out in the desert there, and he, you know, gave information to the B-17 base at Pyote, Texas. The way I knew about the war was just newspapers, you know, mainly. Headline newspapers and all that, but they let us out of school early and we went and we gathered up newspapers. We filled up a whole damn bedroom full of newspapers, and we went out looking for copper. Copper was real important in those days.

*Sure, absolutely.*

**Allan Turner:** And seven cents or eight cents for a pound or something like that. And we had contests and everybody had a job in World War II. We had our victory garden, we grew our own vegetables and food, what we could, and we got a B sticker in our car, three gallons a week in a '33 Dodge Coupe. But we seemed to get by and everybody was . . . My mom was a just 10<sup>th</sup> grade high school, born in 1898 in Nebraska, Belgrade, Nebraska, and she knew how to typewrite and she knew how to take shorthand, and the Air Force really liked that.

*So she worked with the Air Force?*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, she worked with the Air Force base at Pyote Army Airfield. They had B-17s there, and training planes. They were training.

*Did you have any siblings?*

**Allan Turner:** Me?

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** I have some step kids.

*Okay. But you didn't have any brothers or sisters?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, yeah, I had one older sister. God bless her. She has Alzheimer's now. She's up in Oklahoma. She's one of Oklahoma's famous artists. Jasmine Ledbetter is her name. As a matter of fact, we run short of paper in Wink there during about 1942 or 3, and she got the yearbook together and did all the artwork for the yearbook.

*That's great.*

**Allan Turner:** It is a football town there. It's all . . . Everybody goes to the football game.

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** And then starting in the military, well, I was 12. They gave us uniforms, gray and blue, and we had rank. I was a private, and we learned how to calisthenics and drill, and we marched in halftime parades. I don't know if you've heard of it. It was called the Victory Corps.

*I've not but I'm definitely familiar with all the efforts that the young kids did though to help out with scrap drives and the victory gardens and that sort of thing.*

**Allan Turner:** It was something. I'm surprised nobody heard of it. But anyway, if you want to continue on, then the war was over and they sent my dad down to, as a naval technician, down to Brazil for antisubmarine warfare, and we went to San Antonio, Texas, and I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at San Antonio, Texas, when the war ended.

*When the war ended. When you lived in Wink, did you live in town or did you live out on the outskirts?*

**Allan Turner:** I'll tell you, if it had a thousand people, it was lucky.

*Yeah, it's pretty small.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, it was an old oil town. It used to be a boom town, and they had the fourth largest oilfield in Texas way back in the early '30s there.

*Did you ever know Roy Orbison or his family?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, yeah. They got a museum for him down there on Main Street. It's down there now. It's been quite a while since I been out back up there.

*He was probably a little bit younger than you, right?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, yeah, yeah.

*My dad went to high school in Rankin, Texas.*

**Allan Turner:** Rankin, oh, they played Wink.

*Yeah, they did.*

**Allan Turner:** Or they used to.

*My dad is a little bit younger than how old Roy Orbison would have been but he remembered having seen Roy Orbison and his band play at their high school prom one year, and this would have been in the late '50s.*

**Allan Turner:** He was good. I really liked his Pretty Woman song.

*Yeah, he was definitely a legendary singer and he was from the little town of Wink, Texas. That's why when you mentioned Wink, I know where that is.*

**Allan Turner:** My dad, we got A, B, and C stamps for gas. He got the B stamp. You know what that was? Three gallons of gas a week.

*How would they figure out what type of stamp you were supposed to get?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, it was kind of on the job he did. See he was government, and he talked to the fighter bombers, and they even landed out there at one time. It was a B-26 Marauder, boy, it had the powerful engines. It really knock you out when you heard 'em. And I got a ride in a B-25.

*Wow. As a kid?*

**Allan Turner:** No, that was later. But that Marauder B-26 they call it, the Killer or something.

*You'd only be able to get three gallons a week? That's not very much.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, we had a bicycle. He jumped on a bicycle and stuck his ol' .38 in his back pocket and went out on the road. He said he almost hit a guy one night. It's darker than hell out there in the desert.

*Yeah, it is.*

**Allan Turner:** And the stars are beautiful.

*They are. So you were at San Antonio then when the war ended. When was it that you went into the military yourself?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, we moved on to Norman. I know you've heard of Norman, Oklahoma.

*Sure.*

**Allan Turner:** Oklahoma Sooners, football. As a matter of fact, one tidbit about that. You ever heard of a movie actor, James Garner?

*I sure have.*

**Allan Turner:** I played football with him in high school.

*Really? Where was that?*

**Allan Turner:** That was in Norman, Oklahoma.

*In Norman, Oklahoma.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, I played running guard, pulling guard on the split-T formation. He was a running back. We used to block for him. And he had a trick knee and they'd get near the goal line easy to score, and he'd fall flat on his face. That didn't go over too good with the buddies.

*That's something.*

**Allan Turner:** Anyway, on the military, I went into the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. You've heard of it I'm sure.

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** They're the ones that liberated Dachau concentration camp in Germany in 1945. Anyway, I went to three summer camps there with them, '47 to '50, and was a PFC in the medical corps. I started out as assistant ambulance driver.

*So was this something . . . Were you drafted or did you sign up to join?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, no, we joined it see because . . . I'm going to be truthful with you. Don't want anybody to blame me or anything, but we were afraid of getting drafted. So we joined the National Guard to get, and then what they did, they mobilized the Army, the National Guard. They mobilized. They said, "You got 30 days, have your duffle bag," stand on the airport railroad there, and a troop train came by and picked me up and took me to Camp Polk, Louisiana, and my first week in the Army I pulled KP duty.

*What year was that do you think?*

**Allan Turner:** 1950.

*In 1950. So right when the Korean War was starting.*

**Allan Turner:** You better believe it. It was rolling. As a matter of fact, by the time I got over there, we almost lost. I got in there when they had the Pusan Perimeter fight. And that movie actor, ol' Garner, he got wounded too there. He got the Purple Heart.

*I didn't know that.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah.

*So you went to Fort Polk and that was kind of I guess where you did training to get ready to go?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, as a medic but what happened, they asked for some volunteers, Army Rangers. And I went in there and they said, "Why do you want to be a Ranger?" And I said, "Well, if I'm going to combat, I want good training. I want to know what to do." I didn't even know how to shoot a gun, and they . . . I ended up being an Airborne Ranger in the 10<sup>th</sup> Ranger Company. We were the first unit in the whole Army to wear the black beret.

*Okay.*

**Allan Turner:** And our general is still living. He's a major general now, Charles Pete Spragins from Buford, South Carolina. He's still living. He's a major general now.

*So did they sent you to jump school?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, you believe it. Right there at Benning.

*Fort Benning.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, they had four jump tires there. The one they closed down. I got one of the last glider patches in the Army. You know that was the round one on the cap that had an airplane on it and a parachute. You seen that maybe in the 101<sup>st</sup> and those guys.

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** And they don't have that patch anymore.

*So did you enjoy jump school? When you got there, was it something you were glad you had volunteered for or did you have second thoughts?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, I mean, the general, you know, he made us run everywhere, even to the bathroom. You had to run. We were . . . I was 170 pounds, ready to roll, man. You know, I played guard. I played in the middle of the line. I was used to getting hit. And, you know, jumping out of airplanes, I never did get used to that but . . .

*Sure.*

**Allan Turner:** One of my guys, one of my Rangers, he's still living out in Stockton, California. You know, he retired a sergeant first class, and you know how many jumps he has?

*I have no idea.*

**Allan Turner:** A hundred and fifty.

*That's a lot.*

**Allan Turner:** Army jumping is dangerous.

*It is.*

**Allan Turner:** I mean, helmets go by you. Machine guns drop on top of you. Well, we had some guys killed.

*I know you do a lot of practicing jumping out of towers and just learning how to fall before you get in a plane.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, PLF they call, parachute landing falls, yeah. You hit on your ankle and roll on your butt, back on your butt, and then on your shoulder but you don't want to hit your head.

*That's right. Then when you finally did jump, was it a static line jump?*

**Allan Turner:** It was a static. It was low level. It was, I think, a 900, no, it was about 1500 feet.

*That's still very low.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, and then they went a little higher, 2,000. And we went two night jumps even. And one night jump I just stood up when I hit the ground, and I didn't have to roll, I just stood up.

*You're pretty lucky in that case.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah. But I'll tell you, we had one guy from Baytown, Texas. John Daniels was his name. He was a big, tall corporal, carrying a 300 radio, and they're heavy, you know. And there was an ambulance out there on the field. When jumpers are in the area, you don't put an ambulance out on the drop zone. In the wind blowing 30 miles per hour, you just don't jump. But anyway we did in Japan, and we was a 450-foot jump. We fell 350 before our chute opens, and a lot of guys don't even have time to try the reserve, but he tried to miss that ambulance. He pulled his leg back to kick off of it but he missed, and he went over and hit his tailbone and broke his neck right there.

*Jeez.*

**Allan Turner:** Killed him.

*That's horrible.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, you know, I'll tell it like it is.

*Yes sir. That was on the jump that you were on?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, yeah. I was only about 20 yards from him.

*That shows how dangerous it can be even during just regular training.*

**Allan Turner:** He was a real nice guy. Big, tall dude, Jack Daniels. We always, you know, there's a whiskey named that.

*That's right. So then after you had gone through all that training, how long was jump school at Fort Benning?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, we were delayed on account of the weather. Usually it's four weeks. We had five and we made one jump every day for five days. And one time I went there to the parachute loft where you get your parachute, and you know, they was packing for the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne in 1945, that jump in Normandy, but it was still on the loft and I used it and it worked.

*Well, you're lucky.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, those parachutes in those days were made of silk and they cost a lot of money.

*That's true.*

**Allan Turner:** Six hundred dollars a parachute. But we did have a small reserve chute too. But you the Germans, paratroopers? You know what they, the Waffen-SS?

*Yeah?*

**Allan Turner:** They jumped with one parachute. If it didn't open, sorry fella.

*Yeah, that's not good. Did you ever have to use your reserve chute?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, I should have. I wasn't smart enough to but it's hard. You gotta turn your back to the wind so it'd blow out, see. And if you don't, the wind blows it back into you and it doesn't do you any good and you go right straight down. What they call a roman candle when your shoot just winds up and just shoots you to the ground.

*Yeah, I've seen pictures of that.*

**Allan Turner:** And they had what they call a cigarette roll too where it started rolling from the inside, rolling to the middle, see, and it would collapse you. You gotta watch that.

*Yeah, definitely. It's definitely a lot of hazards involved.*

**Allan Turner:** One thing I think I should tell you. A lot of people don't know if they haven't jumped. Do you know like, I can hear you good and you can hear me good and, "Okay, I'll meet you at the NCO club tonight at eight with your girlfriend, Betty." That's the way it is. Like we're talking now, it's the same way up in the air.

*Sure. I think you're right. I don't think a lot of people realize that once the chute's deployed, you're just floating down.*

**Allan Turner:** And you don't look down to the ground. You look out to the top of the trees so you see how far off the ground you are. If you look directly at the ground, your peripheral vision won't get it, won't kick in, and you're gonna hit hard.

*That makes sense. Yes sir. So how many jumps did you ultimately end up doing?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, once a month, about eight of 'em for that year.

*That's quite a few though.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, yeah.

*Did they have jump wings back then? Did they give you wings?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, yeah, five. I got that . . . I'm proud. I've got 13 medals, a couple of foreign decorations. But my jump wings, they're my main one, and my PFC rank.

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** It took me 12 years to make sergeant.

*So you get through all of your jump school there at Fort Benning, how long is it before they send you to Korea?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, hell, we had to go through Ranger training.

*Okay. Let's talk about Ranger training.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, you know what it was? We come in at two in the morning and got up at five. Two or three hours of sleep we got and we were out, out in the swamps of Georgia. Land navigation they call it.

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** We's lost most of the time. And we did have a trial with the 10<sup>th</sup> British Commandos. You've heard of commandos haven't you?

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** We beat 'em in a speed march, 16-1/2 miles in two hours and 20 minutes, carrying full weapons and all that, BARs and 30-cal machine guns and 60 mortars. We just passed 'em around.

*Jeez.*

**Allan Turner:** And there's some guys fell out too.

*Yeah, that's a fast pace for that many miles with all that gear.*

**Allan Turner:** But I'll give it to the, what's that team? SEAL team. They do that stuff underwater. I don't think I could've made that.

*Well, I know Ranger school is definitely hard though.*

**Allan Turner:** I think 30 percent fall out or something. One thing we did do, how come we were so good, we only had 110 men in our company, and we had the fire power of two regular Army World War II rifle companies. In other words, you have a nine-man squad, it has four M1 rifles in it, okay? We had maybe six or eight of 'em. See, we doubled the firepower and that's what made us tough to handle.

*Well, plus everybody in the outfit was well trained.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, most of 'em were World War II veterans, and a lot of 'em from the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne and those old timers, 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup>. But the thing about the Airborne, they're going out because of what saved me. I was a medic in Vietnam, a line medic, and I was out there, and the choppers saved my life. I could haul a chopper in from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Hospital in Saigon and get 'em out there in 20 minutes to the battlefield, and we saved a lot of lives that way. Made me look good. It wasn't like in the war, in World War II, where guys would run out with red crosses on when the snipers could kill 'em, and do that, like they show in Saving Private Ryan. It might've been that way then but it wasn't when I was in there. They used to put me in the middle of the squad to protect me, and I carried six syringe full of morphine but I turned 'em back into the captain with the field safe when I got back off of patrol. But some of the guys used 'em.

*That's too bad.*

**Allan Turner:** You know, I'm gonna tell the truth.

*Sure. So your specialty, your MOS then was still as a medic but you were jump-trained and Ranger-trained medic. That had to have been a bit of a rarity, right?*



**Allan Turner:** No, in the Rangers I was on a 60-mortar crew. You know, you can throw that. It's a small mortar.

*It is.*

**Allan Turner:** You can throw 'em like a hand grenade really. But the rest was . . . I was in the Air Force medics too.

*Tell us then what it was like then when you got over to Korea. Was this in '50?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, we were ready to go, ready to go. But my captain, they got mad at us for wearing the black beret when we went on town. See, it wasn't . . . To be an Army regulation, it's gotta be passed by Congress, and we couldn't get . . . They got mad at us. Oh, another thing, the 11<sup>th</sup> Ranger Company was from the 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in California. They were badass guys, you know, motorcyclists and beach boys and stuff like that. But anyway, when we got over there, we went to four months, went to amphibious landing, climbing down the side of a boat into the water, you know. It wasn't too comfortable.

*Sure.*

**Allan Turner:** And then we stayed out there and they told us . . . The whole 45<sup>th</sup>, there was 18,000 on us on that northern island up next to Russia, and they told us that the Japanese defense force is going to try to sneak through our lines, you know. It was kind of war games. And you know what they did? They went through there and we didn't even see 'em.

*Interesting.*

**Allan Turner:** And there was only a couple hundred of 'em. A whole division was looking for 'em.

*Sure. So at this point you'd been activated so you were still kind of a guardsman or reservist but you were on active duty at this point, right?*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, National Guard they called it.

*How long did you end up spending in Korea? Were you there until '53?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, yeah, I was there about nine months front line duty. It was right near the front line. I was an ambulance driver. We broke up the Rangers at that time. One of the . . . One Ranger company per division, and some of the generals didn't like that or something. There was a big blowout and so they . . . And some of those Ranger companies really got in some bad battles. The 5<sup>th</sup> Ranger Company and the 8<sup>th</sup> Ranger Company, they were just before us. They got damn near all wiped out, and there was hundreds of Chinese dead in their positions. But they broke us up and said we could go back to the 187<sup>th</sup> Airborne, that was a regiment, regimental unit. They jumped in the Taegu jump, it was a combat jump. I missed that one, but I chose, like a lot of the NGs, to go back to our old National Guard company, and most of them were all Indian guys. Our lieutenants were Sac Fox Indians and World War II veterans, went through Africa, North Africa. We had a hell of a company.

*Sounds like it. Sounds like you had a lot of experienced leadership.*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, as a matter of fact, our general was in West Point, and he was in World War II, and he was in Korea. He made major there in Korea in a recon unit. That's a unit that goes out scouting early ahead of the combat troops, and he made major there. And then he was a one-star in Americal Division, you might of heard of that.

*I have, yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** The 198<sup>th</sup>, 199<sup>th</sup> Regiments, and he used to fly around in a helicopter and give 'em orders in Vietnam.

*When you were in Korea, what were your thoughts?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, I was scared.

*Scared, sure.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, my first . . . I was going up to the front line, up Route 33 up to Iron Triangle up to Old Baldy . . . We were fighting over the hills in that day. We were fighting over Pork Chop Hill and Hamburger Hill and all that, and it was pretty damn bloody. I looked over . . . I was riding in the back of a two and a half tron, and they said to stay on the road, the dirt road, and don't get off and hit the mines or the barbed wire, the concertina wire is what it is. But the guy did all right but one lieutenant I looked over was blown up. He hit one of those mines and his leg went one way and the body went the other. That's the first thing I saw when I got up there. And noises still bother me. You got four points a month. See, that line, that DMZ is 110 miles long. We didn't walk over the hills. We rode in two and a half ton trucks with a wooden seat, and I got a pilonidal cyst from it, you know, gooky and bloody and everything in my shorts and everything. They sent me back to where they operated on me in the Pusan 121<sup>st</sup> Hospital, and then I thought I was going home, you know? But they give me a new Garand M1 rifle with ammo and sent me back up on the . . . They had an Army troop train with machine guns on it that went up, took us back to the front line. That didn't turn out too good but I finally made it.

*Yes sir. We're glad you did. Were you able to get much mail from home? Did you write to your parents or friends?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, yeah. There's really good Army post office, really good. We had APO 86 was our number over in Japan, and we got mail. I even got a telegram. My foxhole buddy was married and everything, and he went on, I think met his wife over there in Japan or something, and they had a reunion but he sent me a telegraph, a Western Union telegraph.

*While you were in Korea?*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, he called me some name and all that. He was a Oklahoma City police officer, one that trained the first dogs in Oklahoma City. He and I were foxhole buddies. The booze got to him anyway. His name was Wilkinson, Corporal Wilkinson was his name.

*So he sent you a telegram while you were there.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, you know how GIs are. They tease each other, you know. It keeps morale up.

*Sure, you have to do something to keep it up.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, to pass the time.

*How often would your unit move around? Were you pretty stationary or were you on the go a lot?*

**Allan Turner:** Whereabouts?

*In Korea.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, pretty stationary right there. We were the closest division to Pyongyang. The capital was only 75 miles from us. If we'd ever . . . And the Puerto Rican regiment was on our right flank, and Chinese busted through them one time and we almost had to . . . Well, we did retreat for about 10 or 15 miles. We had 48 ambulances in that . . . And we had to pull up and we went back down Route 33 at 4 o'clock in the damn morning, and we were scared, you know, and it's cold, and my buddy was outside kind of directing traffic, and I thought he said go on, you know. So I gunned the old Dodge, '41 is what we had, ambulance, and I left him behind. And we still laugh about it. He said, "Damn you, Turner, you could'a got me killed. I didn't even have a gun." What happened, the MPs are the last ones when you pull out of a place, in the military the MPs are the last ones to leave. They picked him up and brought him back. We got a kick out of that one.

*Yes sir. How long overall did you end up serving in Korea? Were you there for a couple years?*

**Allan Turner:** No, after you get line duty . . . I got four points a month for nine months, 36 points, and I was going home. Nine months.

*After nine months.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, at that time they were just fighting over the mountains, you know. And there wasn't no big offense. Now the Marines up a little further north up there, they got, well, I got, well, I call it retreated. They won't admit it. The 6<sup>th</sup> Marines retreated from the Chosin Reservoir.

*Yeah, the Chosin Reservoir.*

**Allan Turner:** And they retreated, that's what it was. They said, "Well, we're just going backwards," or something.

*Yeah, they were getting in a lot of trouble there.*

**Allan Turner:** I'll tell you, we used to fight with the Marines all the time. Rangers and Marines, they don't get along.

*Oh really? How often would you see the Marine units?*

**Allan Turner:** I didn't see 'em that much. I learned about it, but you'd hear about 'em, you know. And we had . . . We relieved the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav up there. You know the horseshoe, got a big yellow patch with a stripe through it? You've seen that, hadn't you?

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** That's 1<sup>st</sup> Cav Division. And you know what they did? They painted that . . . They were crazy about that patch. They painted all the rocks with that patch. But I guess they did see quite a bit of action.

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** And then we relieved 'em up there.

*I guess you were probably pretty happy after having been there to be able to get to come back home for a little while.*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, it was miserable. It was cold all the time. I stood in . . . We had the old World War II buckle-on boots. You might have seen the buckles on 'em, in the old days, and some of the guys got Mickey Mouse boots, were rubber. But my feet right now are colder than hell, and that's from Korea in 1951. I know that.

*Yes sir. Did you have any frostbite?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, some guys. You know what they did? All right now, I'm gonna tell it like it is. They take an M1 and blow their big toe off. They called it the M1 Toe.

*Just so they could get out of there?*

**Allan Turner:** You didn't know that?

*I've heard of some of that.*

**Allan Turner:** They keep it quiet, you know the Army.

*Sure. Did you know any guys that did that?*

**Allan Turner:** Not personally but it did happen.

*Yeah, I'm sure it did. And when you got back, I guess you got back to Oklahoma when they sent you home? Is that right?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, we come a long way back. We went through . . . Oh, I had a Russian-made carbine that I captured, said 1944 on the barrel. You know, it was Russian. It was a 31-caliber, had made a hell of a hunting rifle, and I wanted to take it home, and the sergeant wouldn't let me. He said, "Get rid of it or you're not going on the boat."

*Oh, that's too bad.*

**Allan Turner:** So I went over there in the tent. They had a big ol' tent there filled with all kinds of automatic weapons. Chinese, Czechoslovakian, you name it. A guy could have made a fortune off of those weapons.

*It's too bad he wouldn't let you bring it because I know during World War II a lot of guys brought home weapons and swords and that sort of thing.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, my buddy, he was our scrounger in the company, and you know, he had two bags full of automatic weapons.

*I believe it.*

**Allan Turner:** And we landed in Hawaii, and E-6 and above could go to town but us privates, we were corporals, we couldn't go. But the MPs come on looking for weapons. So he took and threw his bags over the fantail of the boat and lost all that money.

*That's too bad.*

**Allan Turner:** He wanted to go home.

*Yeah.*

**Allan Turner:** As a matter of fact . . . Oh, I better not say it.

*Okay. That's too bad.*

**Allan Turner:** You know what a two-incher is?

*No.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, he had one of those. It's a 50-caliber machine gun.

*That's too bad that he had to get rid of all those weapons.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, you know, I would have used it for hunting.

*Sure, absolutely.*

**Allan Turner:** It's a SKS they called it I think. Yeah, it's a carbine like.

*Yes sir. Sure. So when you get back to Oklahoma, do they demobilize you? Do you get to go back to being a regular National Guardsman then?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, yeah. All of us got out. They gave us 300-dollar enlistment bonus. See, the Oklahoma National Guard did that when we got out. And me and a couple of guys from Oklahoma City, we rented a cab from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and all of us bought a new bright shirt and drank some beer, and we were out. But we didn't have any parades or any of that stuff.

*Sure.*

**Allan Turner:** You know, it was just a forgotten war I think they call it.

*I think you're right.*

**Allan Turner:** Anyway, there were a lot of us in it, and me and my buddies got back together, we played football together. We went out to California there, and we worked in a New York Central freight yard, shipping the war goods to Korea. Made good money and everything. And that's, you know. We all knew ol' James Garner.

*That's interesting.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, the movie actor. We worked out there about a year. One of our buddies got married, and then the other one went back home and I decided to rejoin the Army.

*Okay.*

**Allan Turner:** So I came back and I went back and rejoined it and . . .

*What year was that?*

**Allan Turner:** '53.

*In '53.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, the war was still going on when I re-up.

*That's right.*

**Allan Turner:** And they sent me up to Fort Dix and Fort Devens, Massachusetts. That's where the Army Security Agency was.

*Okay.*

**Allan Turner:** Fort Devens. So I put time in there. And then they wanted me to go out to . . . You need a medic everywhere.

*Sure.*

**Allan Turner:** They wanted me to go to Nevada to Exercise Flash Burn. You know what that was?

*From the blast?*

**Allan Turner:** The big one, the A-bomb.

*Yeah.*

**Allan Turner:** They wanted me to go out and I's ready, and then I had my duffle bag ready and ready to go, you know. I was single, just one duffle bag and you go. And you know what happened?

*No.*

**Allan Turner:** They changed the orders. They said, "Turner, you're going to Iceland."

*Iceland, wow.*

**Allan Turner:** Iceland. That's where I ended up for a year.

*How did you like Iceland?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, it was weird.

*Pretty cold I guess?*

**Allan Turner:** You know they live off of steam coming out from the glaciers, and they have navigation . . . You know that's when they had B-52 bombers and stuff.

*That's right.*

**Allan Turner:** And they had radar station. I pulled medic duty out there with those guys, and it was kinda rough. It was cold out there in a little ol' cabin, you know. And they did have some, an old German, ex-German U-boat base right near there up there where they captured some German U-boats in World War II.

*Were you in Reykjavik?*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, 13 miles from . . . Keflavik was the name of it. It's right next to Reykjavik.

*Were the people pretty friendly?*

**Allan Turner:** Nah, not too friendly.

*Not really?*

**Allan Turner:** They did a lot of black marketing, you know, for American goods. You know you can drink a whiskey, a bottle of whiskey, out on main street up there. They won't arrest you. And they didn't have . . . They had cops but no guns.

*Okay.*

**Allan Turner:** And they don't have a railroad.

*Yeah, it's pretty small island I think in terms of population.*

**Allan Turner:** And you know, you go to one of their houses and it's like a orchard, a fruit orchard, jungle. They like the green stuff, and oranges and apples and stuff like that. They go for that. But they're a hardy people. Matter of fact, they say the Vikings come from there.

*I think that's probably right, especially with the cold conditions, austere conditions they're in.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, it would get cold. And you know up there at 2 o'clock in the morning, you know what you can do? Play horseshoes. It's the Northern Lights they call it. It's like daytime up there at night, and big red streaks in the clouds. Yeah, Northern Lights.

*How long did you end up spending in Iceland?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, about a year. I went on TDY with the Air Force a little bit, and it was a local thing. And then after that, they sent me, let's see where I went. Oh, guess where I ended up?

*Back in Texas?*

**Allan Turner:** Fort Hood, Texas.

*Fort Hood.*

**Allan Turner:** 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division.

*Yeah.*

**Allan Turner:** Company C, 120<sup>th</sup>, I think, no, 46<sup>th</sup> Armed Medical Battalion, yeah. And that was something else.

*Did you end up retiring from the Army? Did you do 20+ years in the Army?*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, well, 16 years in the Army and four and a half in the Air Force.

*Okay, so that gave you over 20.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, 20.

*What was your rank when you retired?*

**Allan Turner:** Corporal, but I was buck sergeant for four years and they gave me that after I went to the Reserve, retired Reserve, and they give me an E-5 stripe. That's what I get, not too bad but I should have retired at least SFCR master sergeant. But, you know, the support troops, you don't get the glory. Same way when I was an Air Force medic. You know who got all the . . . I was four and a half years in there as airman second class. Do you know who got all the stripes?

*I'm not sure.*

**Allan Turner:** The guys on the flight line, the airplanes. Yeah, but us medics, hell, I even drove a crash ambulance for when a plane crashed. I'd go down that pole with the firefighters and drive their ambulance. And one time, one doctor, I know he's kidding though, he said, "Turner, why don't you go help them out of that burning plane?" You know what I told him? Are you there?

*Yes sir. I'm here.*

**Allan Turner:** I said, "Go to hell." I wasn't gonna climb in there where it's burning, you know.

*Yeah.*

**Allan Turner:** But he was just kidding, you know.

*Did you do all that time on active duty or a lot of that in the Reserves, the 20 years?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, Reserve. I didn't do anything. It's just that was the name.

*Okay. So you did 20 years of active duty?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, after I got 10 years in Reserves, then they give me my E-5 stripe because I had had it for four years, see, and active, on active duty. That's the highest rank. I was up for staff sergeant, you know, a field promotion they call it. You know, like Audie Murphy, field promoted him to lieutenant. They do that too, in the ranks sometimes. And when I was getting my lieutenant, my platoon leader told me that I'd get the stripe and he'd pin it on me in 10 days,



and at that time I got a letter from the Red Cross that my dad had died back in Oklahoma so I had to go home.

*Went back home.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, but I came back later but, you know, everything changes in the Army.

*So you did about 16 years in the Army and then you went into the Air Force for the last four or so?*

**Allan Turner:** No, well, it was in between. Four and a half.

*Four and a half. What did you think of the Air Force compared to the Army?*

**Allan Turner:** I liked the Air Force. Boy, they had Air Force hospital down in Harlingen, Texas. It's down in the Valley. You heard of it?

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** And I liked that. I pulled like on ward duty. I took care, I did the cleaning and the mopping and you know, carrying the pail, and ambulance, drove the ambulance and worked in the emergency room. It was a real neat little outfit. You know what happened? Ol' LBJ was president, and he was from down that country, and he didn't like the way they treated him or something. And you know he put in the papers and closed that damn base down and lost 400 jobs, 4,000, I think, civilian jobs there and some of 'em were good friends.

*What year was that? Sometime in the '60s?*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, '63. Wait, '58 to '63, when I was down there. And in between that, before I went there, no it was after. From there, that base, I went to Ankara, Turkey.

*Okay.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, Kemal Ataturk, the father of modern Turkey and . . .

*So you got to see quite a bit of the world then, going to Turkey and Iceland.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, I got to see a belly dancer which most westerners don't get to see. I like Turks. They were kind of like American in old west, you know? Tough and riding horses and donkeys and all that kind of stuff. But I kinda liked it, and I learned a little bit of their language, you know.

*Did you prefer the Air Force to the Army?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, yeah. For one thing, well, no. A staff sergeant in the Air Force is one rank higher than staff sergeant in the Air Force. There's some kind of deal there at that rank. The Army pays more at the next rank or something. There's something there. It's something like the old Army used to have a sergeant first class, E-6, and then, but the real sergeant first class is E-7. So there's something like that on the rank.

*Yeah, a little bit different rank structure I guess.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, you know I've been out a long time. You know, I could have had since I retired, I could have had a flag ceremony, you know, where they get up and they read about you and, you know, at Fort Sam but, you know, I was just a corporal and I did the best I could. I probably could've done better, and I had a little . . .

*But you still got to retire which is pretty good, to do 20 years.*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, yeah, my retirement's pretty good but what really pulled me over is the VA. I'm 80 percent disabled. See, I got a little bit of disability from Agent Orange. I was over there two and a half years.

*In Vietnam.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah. I was down there with the snakes and stuff. At 40 years old, you know, you want a combat soldier at 19 to 26 years old where they're strong. You get a . . . You know, I was still pretty strong and all that but I wasn't near as strong at 40 than I was at 26 or when I was in the Rangers at 20, you know.

*Sure. Where all were you in Vietnam?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, hell, I was down the delta for a while, and I went down through, oh, yeah, I was over to \_ Province over there. You know that's the King Cobra country, the snake that dances? You heard of the King Cobra?

*I have, yeah. You don't want to mess with those.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, and up there, you know what I saw 'em do? The Vietnamese? They wanted us to fight it out for them but I wasn't gonna do it. I was gonna fight for us first. But they killed a Bengal tiger and he was 2,000 pounds, and he had marks on his face where he had fought off other animals for his life, and you know what they did? They killed that Bengal tiger. They're almost extinct now, and for 800 dollars for the skin. They skinned that animal and sold it for 800 dollars. That animal would go for 10 or 20 thousand. I hope I'm not getting carried away. Are you all right?

*No, I'm fine, sir. It's horrible to think of them killing an animal like that.*

**Allan Turner:** But it's their country.

*Sure. So how did you end up, I guess you end up back in Texas then? That's where you retired to?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, let me see now. Oh, yeah, I come back, you know, my dad's death and all. And then in there somewhere, I have to get a chronological thing working. I went to . . . Well, somehow I went up to the . . . Oh, I was out a while, that's right, I remember. I think I was out six months or something, and I enlisted. They wanted to put me in the Fleet Marine Force. That's strictly combat.

*Yeah, that's kind of strange they were moving you.*

**Allan Turner:** Amphibious landing, yeah. So I said, “No, I’ll try the Army.” And they made me acting jack corporal that day, a squad leader, and they sent me to Fort Knox, Kentucky, in armored training. I went through basic training twice.

*Well, that’s not good. I wouldn’t want to do that.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, and so I went from that, and then went back into the medics down at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and then I was out at Fort Ord, California when they had a spinal meningitis deaths out there. I worked on those. We had to wear sterile technique with the gloves and the mask and, you know, all kind of infectious stuff. And there’s a bunch of people died from that spinal meningitis. They closed Fort Ord and everything for a while. Have you ever been out there?

*Not to Fort Ord. I’ve been out to California a lot but never to Fort Ord.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, it was near Seaside, California. And it was about . . . It’s north of Los Angeles about 150-250 miles maybe, but it’s below Oakland, California.

*Yeah, I know the general area. It was a pretty area, wasn’t it?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, yeah. But when I was up there, I was riding a motorcycle and I had a Triumph Bonneville. It was pretty good. I liked it. It was a hustler, they called it a Scrambler. And I was pushing it along the road and the Hell’s Angels come by. You’ve heard of them?

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** And they asked if they could help. They was real nice. And I said, “I don’t know. I’m been pushing this thing for half a mile. How come it won’t start?” And one of the old timers said, “Well, why don’t you do this.” He reached over and flipped the reserve fuel tank on. I felt about that big.

*That’s good they helped you out though.*

**Allan Turner:** I was only 30 years old then. I’m 83 now.

*So you didn’t know about the reserve fuel tank then?*

**Allan Turner:** Well, I didn’t then but I do now. Well, I went to Fort Ord there, and then, let’s see. Then I went up to Fort Lewis, Washington, where it rains all the time, and worked up there at an Army dispensary a while, and from there, oh, I did have a good duty over in Paju, Korea, went back again in ’65 and ’66. And those people are our allies, the South Koreans. And old mamasan told me the first time I was there, she said, “I want to thank you.” And I said, “What, mamasan?” An old lady. “We want to thank you. You saved our country.” I said, “Ah, hell. We did it for ourselves too.” And she said, “Nah, if it wasn’t for you guys, I wouldn’t be here.” And I felt good, you know.

*That’s great.*

**Allan Turner:** And they are good allies. I had a good job there, run a dispensary at night taking care of the big wheels, you know, the generals and stuff. That was pretty good duty. Anyway,

I'm trying to kind of figure out where I went after that. Oh, I went back, and I went to Germany, and I went to 56<sup>th</sup> General Hospital, and they wanted me to stay. The reenlistment sergeant said they wanted to send me to Berlin. They have a hell of a clinic up there in Berlin. This was when it was West Berlin in '73, and I wanted that but I had a Black sergeant. He worked me 11 nights straight without a day off, and we had younger guys . . . I was just a corporal then. And we had younger guys that were corporals but they were Black, and they pulled their five day and then off two. And he wouldn't let me go out of there and get that job over . . . I probably would have reenlisted then but I said, "Put my papers in. I'm going home." They wanted me to stay. They said, "Okay, well, if you stay six more months, we'll send you to Korea. You liked Korea, didn't you?" And I said yeah. But it was time for me to go.

*Yes sir. It sounds like you had a long career and definitely went a lot of places throughout that tour.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, I was single, you know. I didn't have a family. And now the military, they take care of your families. But the last four years, I had a family.

*Yes sir, that's good. How long have you been in the home there in Floresville?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, six months is all.

*Six months, yes sir. As someone who was a medic, I guess you'd know a little bit about taking care of yourself.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, yeah. The thing about it is, I still see what happened. I guess, from what I understand, my blood sugar got down to 40. I didn't know anything about diabetes. I was living on Medicare and I was taking medicines. I've taken medicines, you know. You know what they told me if I retired from the Army, I wouldn't have to pay for any of my medicines. Don't believe it. I paid five dollars a whack for a while, but that adds up.

*Sure.*

**Allan Turner:** Anyway, I guess it went down to 40 and I was carrying something down the hallway. I got a house and everything, and all of a sudden I felt like I was gonna pass out and everything went crazy and I dropped some stuff I was carrying and I think I hit my head maybe on the . . . They have cement floors. You've seen the cement floors, right?

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** And I think . . . Then I tried to get up and I couldn't get myself up. Man, I used to do pushups, you know? And my boy finally come by about four and a half hours later and got me up. And he says, "Well, I'm gonna do something about this." And he got me over here.

*Well, that's good. I hope they're taking good care of you there.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, they say I'm not having to pay for anything but so far I hadn't but I had paid for . . . I just got some new glasses. Took me six months. Three hundred dollars I paid for them.

*Yeah.*

**Allan Turner:** But I gotta have my glasses.

*Sure, yeah. You got to.*

**Allan Turner:** I can read the small print. Holds you back, you know. And I read a book the other day in big print and really enjoyed it.

*Good, good. I love to read too, so I can't imagine what that's like, not to be able to read.*

**Allan Turner:** You gotta take care of your eyes too because . . . You know what they told me and I didn't know it. I was a medic. That they can tell if you're gonna get diabetes, high blood pressure, low blood pressure, all kinds of diseases, they can see through your eyes.

*I think there's a lot of truth to that.*

**Allan Turner:** Yeah, so go get 'em taken . . . And I had all that done, and I got the one good eye, really good, and at one time it was 20/15, and I made sharpshooter with the M14 with that. The other eye was bad or something, I don't know. I think I should'a . . . You've heard of them, what they call, where you put a patch over the eye, and my mother should have done that. Anyway, I don't understand that but they've been feeding us a lot of medicine over here.

*Hopefully the food's all right.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, the food, you know, it's passable but you see in the Army, they got A, B and C food. And the Rangers or the Green Berets, they get A food. But the privates and recruits, they're getting C, you know. That's the way it is. You gotta rough it when you're the private, you know. So there's a lot of difference there.

*Well, I'm glad they set up this interview so we could talk to you today. I don't know if they told you but we're saving these stories in our archives and for future generations for posterity. We have documents here that go back to the 1700s. We have the original land grant that David Crockett's widow received when he was killed at the Alamo, and we have the registro that Stephen F. Austin kept of all the original settlers that came to Texas. So our goal is to add these interviews to that archive, and with that in mind, is there anything you would want to say to somebody listening to this interview years from now?*

**Allan Turner:** Oh, years from now?

*Yes sir.*

**Allan Turner:** Love your country. Be a patriot. Believe in God and we'll all be better for it.

*That's good advice.*

**Allan Turner:** And try to be truthful and honest at all times as much as you can. I know how it is being a human being. You know, we like to kind of skip around at some point.

*Yes sir. Well, sir, I appreciate it, and in a couple weeks or so, we're going to send to you copies of this interview on CDs that you can give to friends or family, and we'll also include a nice letter and certificate from Commissioner Patterson in a commemorative binder. It's just a very small way for the State of Texas to say thank you to you for your service to our nation.*

**Allan Turner:** Well, if you get a chance now, have them try to send one to James Garner. Now I don't even think he remembers me but he might. I missed him last . . . You know what? He has a statue in Norman, Oklahoma. It's seven foot tall with his Maverick guns on and all that. He was a gambler in the Maverick movie.

*We'll try to track him down.*

**Allan Turner:** And they named a street after him. But I think he's in pretty bad health. He's about two years older than I am. He's about 85 or 86 now but if we send him one to him, maybe he'll enjoy it. He just wrote a book too. He was a hell of a guy. You know, I grew up with the Indians, right? Well, I went to school with 'em. My best buddy is a full-blooded Chickasaw Indian. He's still living. He was in the Korean War too. But I want to thank you for your time.

*Yes sir, I thank you, and I'll put my card in there as well so you'll have my card. And then also the ladies there in the activities office know how to get a hold of me too in case you need to give me a call. But be looking for the package probably in a couple weeks or so.*

**Allan Turner:** Okay, what's that name again? Oh, Grabberfield, what?

*No, Crabtree.*

**Allan Turner:** We'll just say Crab, right?

*Crabtree.*

**Allan Turner:** Is that all right, or tree?

*Yeah, James Crabtree.*

**Allan Turner:** Okay, that's great.

*All right, sir. Thank you and take care.*

**Allan Turner:** Good bye. God bless.

*Yes sir, you too. Bye bye.*